

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 FPC-01 H-01
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BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, GR
SUBJECT: SUSPENSION OF GREEK OIL EXPLORATION IN AEGEAN DENIED

1. A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE IN THE SEPTEMBER 18 ISSUE OF THE PRO-GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER "KATHIMERINI" ALLEGED THAT THE GREEK GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO SUSPEND OIL EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES IN THE AEGEAN SEA ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS. PROMPTING THE DECISION, THE ARTICLE CLAIMED, WAS DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE MEAGER QUANTITY AND POOR QUALITY OF THE OIL THUS FAR DISCOVERED AROUND THE ISLAND OF THASSOS AND THE DESIRE TO AVOID FURTHER AGGRAVATING GRECO-TURKISH RELATIONS. THE FOLLOWING ISSUE OF "KATHIMERINI" THEN CARRIED A COLUMN ON THE SUBJECT BY GEORGE DROSSOS, A LEADING POLITICAL COMMENTATOR KNOWN TO BE CLOSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO LABELED THE MOVE TO SUSPEND OIL EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES IN THE AEGEAN "A GOOD WILL GES-

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TURE" BY THE GREEKS DESIGNED TO AVOID PROVOKING TURKEY. THE SAME NEWSPAPER, HOWEVER, SUBSEQUENTLY PRINTED A FIRM DENIAL OF THE STORY BY THE PUBLIC PETROLEUM CORPORATION (DEP).

2. DURING SEPTEMBER 21 COURTESY CALL BY EMBOFF ON DEP GENERAL MANAGER KYRIAKOS ZAKHOS, THE LATTER CATEGORICALLY

DENIED RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS FROM CARAMANLIS OR ANYONE ELSE TO SUSPEND OIL EXPLORATION IN THE AEGEAN. ACCORDING TO ZAKHOS, MINISTER OF COORDINATION PAPALIGOURAS HAD BEEN OUTRAGED BY THE PRESS STORY AND HAD INSTRUCTED ZAKHOS TO ISSUE AN IMMEDIATE DENIAL WHICH WAS CARRIED IN THE SEPTEMBER 20 ISSUE OF "KATHIMERINI" AS WELL AS BY OTHER NEWSPAPERS. ZAKHOS EMPHASIZED THAT OIL EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES WERE CONTINUING THROUGHTOUT GREECE, , INCLUDING THE AEGEAN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEP'S LONG-STANDING BASIC PLANS. HE ENVISAGED NO SUBSTAN- TIAL CHANGES, PARTICULARLY SINCE CONTRACTS AND ARRANGEMENTS WITH FOREIGN OIL DRILLING FIRMS HAD BEEN SIGNED AND WERE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING CARRIED OUT. ZAKHOS NOTED THAT, WHILE GREEK INTEREST WAS CONCENTRATED IN THE NESTOS DELTA AND THE IONAIN SEA AREAS, THE PRESS REPORTS ABOUT A SUSPENSION OF OIL EXPLORATION ACTIVITY IN THE AEGEAN WERE UNFOUNDED.

3. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT'S VIGOROUS DENIAL OF THE "KATHIMERINI" STORY REFLECTS THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY IN GREECE WITH RESPECT TO ANYTHING CONCERNING THE AEGEAN. OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THE DEP'S PLANS IN THE IMMEDIATE MONTHS AHEAD DO NOT CALL FOR MUCH ACTIVITY IN THE AEGEAN AND THE "KATHIMERINE" STORY MAY BE BASED ON A DISTORTED ACCOUNT OF THIS. IN ANY CASE, IT WOULD BECOME EVIDENT VERY QUICKLY IF THE GOG, IN FACT, SUSPENDED ITS EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES IN THE THASSOS ISLAND AREA AND SHIFTED TO THE IONIAN SEA WHERE NO EXTENSIVE EXPLORATION

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ACTIVITIES ARE UNDERWAY AT PRESENT.
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Message Attributes

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Decapton Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Event:
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